



Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF VENTURA
Hall of Justice
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

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Superior Court Gets New Executive Officer

By Tracy Wilson, L.A. Times Staff Writer

A veteran courts administrator from Seattle will take over next month as the new executive officer of the Ventura County Superior Court.

Michael D. Planet, 45, will replace outgoing executive officer Sheila Gonzalez who resigned last month to become California's first regional courts administrative director.

Planet is currently administrator of the King County Superior Court in Washington, a position he has held for the past 10 years. He previously worked as a courts manager in Arizona.

"You can't imagine how excited I am," Planet said Thursday.

"When I learned that Sheila was leaving, and her position was open, I just said, 'Are you kidding? I want that job.'"

Planet was among half a dozen top court administrators screened for the position according to Ventura County Presiding Superior Court Judge Bruce A. Clark.

Clark said Planet was selected based on his experience, educational background and "excellent people skills."

Planet holds a master's degree in justice administration from the American University in Washington, D.C., and an undergraduate degree in politics and government from the University of Maryland.

"He is just going to do a great job," Clark said Thursday. "He knows what we do, he knows what Sheila accomplished, and he is just raring to go to work."

Gonzalez, 57, held the position for 14 years and earned a reputation as a tough, creative manager committed to making courts more accessible to the public.

Under her direction, the Ventura County courts began free legal clinics, launched juvenile and adult drug courts and overhauled a computerized filing system to allow residents to check cases via the Internet.

Gonzalez and Planet have known each other for several years, serving on court-related organizations. Planet said his primary goal will be to foster Ventura County's reputation as one of the top courts in the nation.

"There is no question Sheila has set a legacy, reputation and an expectation for how the staff and judges serve the public. And that is the kind of environment you want to walk into," he said.

Planet is expected to start his new job in mid-May.

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